

OLD PAINTING GIVES CLEW to the FATE of THEODOSIA BURRALSTON

Tends to prove that Aaron Burr's daughter was made to walk the plank by Lafitte's crew.



WITHIN a few days the famous portrait of Theodosia Burr Alston has been hung in the Hall of History of North Carolina, thus giving official recognition, if indeed such were required, to the tragic romance which has long attached to this painting. In the prominence of the people concerned in this strange old tale, in the mystery of their end and the curious fatality by which the story came to light, point by point, half a century later, the tragedy has scarcely its counterpart in fiction.

Theodosia Burr Alston, the daughter of Aaron Burr, a famous beauty of her day, was lost at sea early in the last century. The ship on which she had set sail from Georgetown, South Carolina, bound for New York, with a large crew and many passengers, disappeared, leaving no single survivor or sign of wreckage. For fifty years the mystery was unexplained. By the merest chance after all these years, the gruesome story finally came to be told. It was learned that the ship carrying Aaron Burr's daughter had been captured by pirates, that the entire ship's company had been forced to walk the plank, and even the details of the death of Theodosia Alston came to be described. There were no survivors, but by a curious chance, which defies all the laws of probability, a relic of the tragedy, the portrait of Mrs. Alston, was saved. The painting was carried on the ill-fated ship and was a witness to the horrors of the pirates' capture.

The Vandeille Portrait.

The portrait of Mrs. Alston is believed to have been painted by Vandeille, a protégé of Aaron Burr. It is known that Vandeille received a commission from Burr to paint his daughter Theodosia's portrait in 1802. The painting came to light in the summer of 1858, when it was discovered in the hut of a fisherman on the coast of North Carolina. The little hut was far away from any town or habitation, on a particularly lonely stretch of beach known as Nag's Head. The reputation

of Nag's Head is of course familiar. The name was given it 150 years ago. This reach of shore is covered with sand dunes, in some instances half a mile in length and 60 feet in width, which offer remarkable facilities for concealment. A dangerous reef, likely to prove fatal to any ship which might venture ashore, extends out from this beach a considerable distance.

The formation plays an important part in the old tales which are still told of this region. In the early days, so the stories run, the people who lived along this shore preyed on the wrecks of ships which they lured ashore to certain destruction. It was common, if the only legends are to be credited, to deceive the ships with false lights and then, quietly await the reward of such enterprise. A lighted lantern was tied to a neck of a horse and its legs would be hobbled to make it limp and, of course, restrict its speed. The horse, in stumbling over the irregular sand dunes, would naturally cause the light he carried to bob up and down violently, much as would a light upon a ship at sea.

It was in this lonely region that the painting of Aaron Burr's daughter was discovered so many years after the disappearance of the ship. In the summer of 1859 Dr. W. G. Pool, a prominent physician of North Carolina, chanced to spend the summer at Nag's Head, and during his holiday was called upon to attend an old woman named Mann. This woman was nearly 70 years old, and had spent her entire life on this stretch of beach.

In all her life, it appeared, she had never before been attended by a physician nor had any one from the outside world ever entered her curious old home. Dr. Pool was successful in treating his patient after many visits. His patient was very grateful and offered to give him anything in her possession in lieu of a fee, except money, since she was almost destitute. The doctor made no charge for his services.

During his visits Dr. Pool had noticed with astonishment an excellent portrait in oils, beautifully framed, hanging on the walls of this little hut, in striking contrast to the extreme poverty of the rooms. He asked many questions as to its history, but the old woman would say nothing about it. Finally, in her gratitude for her recovery, the old woman told the story of the painting, and one day, when the doctor's little girl visited her, she actually presented the picture to her. The portrait was afterward identified as that of Mrs. Theodosia Burr Alston. It is due to the courtesy of Dr. Pool's daughter, now Mrs. John P. Overman, that the painting has within the last few days been loaned to the Hall of History of North Carolina.

The painting had been in the old woman's possession for many years. Just how many she did not know. She was a young girl when it had come ashore at Nag's Head. The ship which brought it, she said, had come ashore with all her sails set, guided by the merest chance. She was quickly boarded by the wreckers, who found her entirely deserted, with

her tiller lashed down. In her cabin the dinner tables were found as if for a meal. The beds were not made up in the staterooms. The floors were littered with a curious disarray of trunks broken open, with their contents scattered in all directions. There was no blood about the vessel to indicate a fight, no bodies, no signs of a violent encounter. To the experienced eyes of the wreckers, however, the story of the deserted ship was as clear as print. In the tables set for a meal and so suddenly interrupted they could see that the ship had been surprised. In the trunks broken open and the scattered clothing they saw the work of pirates.

Ship's Company Walked the Plank.

The absence of any sign of struggle showed that the ship's company must have met death by walking the plank. The tiller lashed down, the sails set to every breeze again indicated the drunken fancy of those who had captured, looted and deserted her. The old woman who recalled this strange tale could not fix the year of the wreck,

so that the interval, probably to be measured by years, during which the deserted ship tacked aimlessly about the seas will never be known.

One of the wreckers to board the ship at Nag's Head, a man named Tillet, collected a few pieces of old finery from the cabin floors and carried them ashore to give them to his sweetheart. Out of the wreckage he picked up a silk dress, a vase, a lace shawl, a bunch of wax flowers and a painting. Shortly afterward he married the girl. The poverty-stricken old woman in the deserted hut at Nag's Head whom Dr. Pool treated had preserved this painting with its frame for half a century.

For many years this painting has been an object of great curiosity to people from all parts of the country. Many have made the trip to Elizabeth City, where it has been exhibited, in the hope of identifying it. Among these visitors have been several members of the Burr family, and these have stated their full belief that the painting is certainly the portrait of the ill-fated Theodosia. Several friends of the family have made the trip from New York

to see the painting, and among them all there has been no dissenting voice. The list of those who have identified it is too long to repeat here.

Borne to Shore on Old Ship.

The actual story of the tragedy was not told until many years after all hope of news of the lost ship had been given over. The strange sequel to the romantic story of the painting was gained from the deathbed confession of an old pirate who died in a poorhouse in Michigan many years after these tragic scenes. He had been haunted all his life by the memory of it. It was actually by his own hands that Aaron Burr's daughter was drowned.

In his early life this man had been one of the Lafitte gang, and had taken part in many desperate attacks. The pirate ship on which he sailed sighted a vessel one day during a cruise near the coast of North Carolina and gave chase. They finally overtook her, encountered little resistance, and finally boarded her. The prize was found to carry a valuable cargo and many pas-

sengers. The pirates helped themselves, breaking open trunks and looting every possible hiding place for treasure. The death of every man and woman on board was decided to be necessary, for fear that should by any chance one escape there would be evidence against them. This was accomplished in the simplest manner by forcing them all to walk the plank.

The old pirate was hardened to such sights, yet the death of Theodosia made so vivid an impression upon him that it was always before him. Her beauty and doubtless her breeding contrasted with the rest. The old pirate described the scene in detail. He had been haunted all his life by the beautiful face of this woman, with its expression of agony as she stood for a moment on the plank facing her death. When the last of the passengers had gone the ship was abandoned, her tiller was lashed down and she was set adrift with all sails set. After years of aimless drifting on a thousand different tacks she carried this curious old portrait to a place of safety.

Love Opens Heavens to Repentant Sinner

By Count Leo Tolstoy.

A MAN once lived to become 70 years old and spent his whole life in sin. And he took sick and did not repent. But when death came he cried in his last hour and said: "O Lord, forgive me as thou forgavest the robber on the cross." Scarcely had he pronounced these words when his soul left his body. The soul of the sinner had learned to love God and, believing in his goodness, came to the doors of paradise, where it knocked and asked to be let in.

And the voice behind the door asked: "Who knocks at the doors of paradise? And what good deeds has this man performed while he was alive?"

The man pleaded: "Oh, Saint Peter, take pity on me; think of the weakness of man and the charity of God. Were you not one of Christ's disciples, and did you not hear his teaching from his own lips? Think of how sad he felt when he asked you to stay awake and pray and he found you sleeping three times, because your eyes were heavy. Think of how you denied that you knew anything of him when he was led before Caiaphas. And think of how the cock crowed and you went away and cried bitterly."

Then the voice behind the door grew silent.

But the sinner stood long there and after a while he again knocked at the door.

And from behind the door again came another voice and said: "Who is this man and how did he spend his life on earth?"

Then the voice of the recording angel repeated once more all the evil things the sinner had done and did not mention any good deeds.

Then the voice behind the door said: "Go away from here; sinners like you cannot be allowed to live with us in paradise."

Then the sinner said: "Master, I hear

your voice but I do not see your face and I do not know your name."

And the voice replied: "I am the King David."

But the sinner did not yet give up hope, went closer to the door and said: "Take pity on me, Oh, King David, remember the weakness of man and the charity of God; God loved you and elevated you above all men. You had everything—a kingdom, glory, wealth, wives and children; but when you were from the roof of your palace saw the wife of a poor man, sinful thought conquered and you took the wife away while you sent her husband to be killed in war. You, who were so rich took everything away from one who was poor and had him killed. That is just what I have done. And then think how you regretted it and said: 'I confess my guilt and repent. Thus it is also with me, and therefore you should not leave me outside.'"

The voice behind the door could reply nothing.

Again the sinner stood waiting, but once he took courage and asked to be let into heaven.

And from behind the door came a third voice which asked: "Who is this man and how did he live on earth?"

The voice of the recording angel for the

third time read off all his evil deeds and did not mention a single charitable one.

And the voice from behind the door said: "Go away from here. Sinners like you cannot be allowed to enter."

Then the sinner replied: "I hear your voice, but I do not see your face and I do not know your name."

The voice replied: "I am John, favorite disciple of Christ."

Then the sinner rejoiced and said: "Now I am sure that I shall be admitted. Saint Peter and David will let me in because they know the weakness of man and the charity of God. But you will admit me because in you is true love. Did not you, John, write in your book that God is love and that he who does not love does not know God. Did not also when you grew old and were too feeble to preach any longer say to your followers: 'Brethren, love one another. How can you then how hate me and drive me away from here? You must either set against your own teachings or you must love me and let me go into heaven.'"

And the door of paradise opened and John took the repentant sinner into his arms and led him into heaven.

A Suspicion.

The Norwegians are insisting that King Haakon shall be anointed with oil at his coronation. Do we see John D.'s fine Italian hand in this?

Man With Dagger Fights Huge Leopard

From the London Tribune.

BABU JOTINDRA NATH MUKERJEE, a shorthand writer in the financial department of the Bengal government, recently visited his home in Kays, near Kusteia. On the morning of the 25th instant there was a great panic among the quiet villagers, as the story got abroad that a huge leopard killed some head of cattle and injured a child overnight and was hiding in a shrub within a mile of the village.

The young man promptly got up a party to rid the neighborhood of the pest. The entire party could muster only one gun—a more or less useless breech-loader—between them all. This precious weapon Jotindra gave to a cousin who, though reputed to be a good shot, was of less robust build, and was, therefore, less likely to be able to give a good account of himself without the aid of firearms. He himself was armed only with a lathi and a Nepalese kukri. The villagers beat the patch of shrub for half an hour when out bounded a formidable-looking animal in prime condition and with a beautiful skin. He promptly tackled one of the

villagers, who, however, made good his escape unhurt.

The only gun was 100 yards away and from this distance Jotindra's cousin took a difficult shot, which hit the animal on the neck, but the bullet glanced off without doing more serious damage than a skin wound. The thoroughly roused animal now charged Jotindra, who, however, stood firm to receive the rapidly advancing mass of black and yellow. As the animal sprang on to him he nimbly jumped to one side and delivered an ugly smash on one side of the animal's head, followed by a rapid succession of cuts on the stomach and chest. The animal roared and bit and clawed the left arm of the sportsman, who throttled him with the right and shook him off with such force that the animal lost its balance and rolled on the ground.

Jotindra promptly took advantage of the situation and planted his right foot on the animal's belly, thus pinning him down on the ground while he rained vicious thrusts with the dagger all over the brute's body. Although badly wounded the animal had still plenty of fight left in him, and craning and wriggling his neck he was able to plant his fangs into the shikari's thigh just above

the kneecap, while the deadly claws were incessantly at work on other parts of the youth's body.

Jotindra's dagger came into play again, and one terrific blow drove the skull through the brain. The beast then let go his bite and lay writhing in death agony on the ground, but yet impatiently snapping its jaws together every now and again at its assailant, who finally thrust his dagger into the throat. With one mighty snap the beast held the blade in its jaws and expired. It was a job to release the dagger from the grip of the fangs of the dead leopard. The spectators were horrified and held spellbound by the sight, so much so that not a finger was raised to assist Jotindra in his unequal fight. The leopard measured seven feet from tip to tip and was a magnificent specimen of his kind.

Jotindra is a dark complexioned youth of 24 or 25, tall, slender and well built. His soft, boyish face, Brahminical top-knot and head necklaces give no indication of his dauntless courage. The prayers and wishes of the entire Bengalee nation will be with the young hero, news of whose complete recovery will be eagerly awaited.